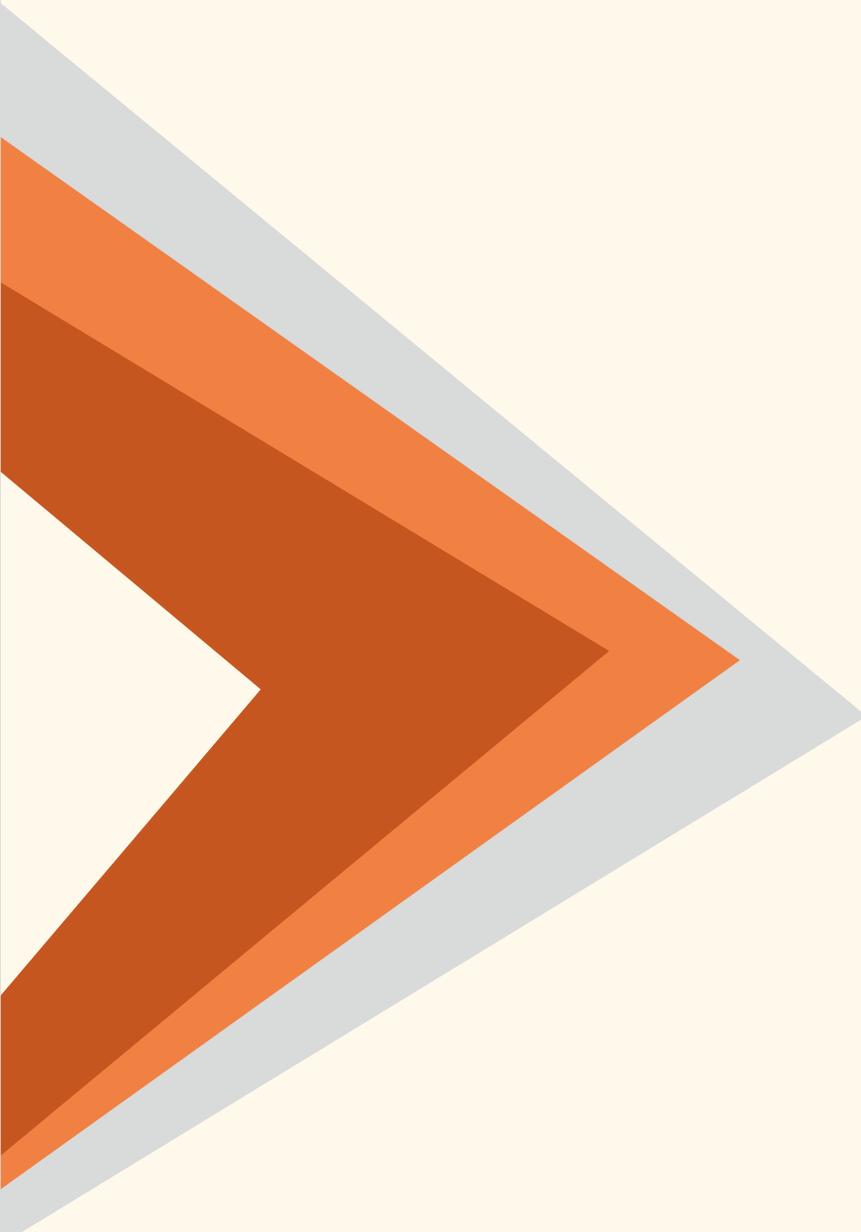


Implementation Recommendations

**for State School Standards Authority
(SSSA)**

as laid down in NEP 2020-Section 8



Task No 212 State I 2021-2023

[Recommendations made by FICCI – ARISE & Central Square Foundation (CSF)]

Background

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 highlights the need to review and revise the existing regulatory framework for school education in India. It states that “the goal of the school education regulatory system must be to continually improve educational outcomes... regulation must aim to empower schools and teachers with trust, enabling them to strive for excellence and perform at their very best, while ensuring the integrity of the system through the enforcement of complete transparency and full public disclosure of all finances, procedures, and educational outcomes.”

Within this context, various private school associations, studied and brought out that there are as many as 145 State Acts and 101 corresponding rules that govern K-12 education. Within these, each state has a “School Code” which is a lengthy and dense compilation (over 2000 pages, each) of executive orders, notices and circulars issued by the state Departments of Education. These norms are deeply prescriptive and lay down regulatory frameworks for licensure, admissions, staff employment, etc. An analysis of the legislation for Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and several other states shows that most norms do not hold government schools accountable to the same standards as those for private schools. They impose ambiguous requirements (for example, proving a school is essential) and heavy penalties (for example, withdrawal of recognition) for private schools. Furthermore, they do not chart out a clear dispute resolution mechanism.

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) identifies 'conflict of interest' as the core issue of the current regulatory framework. It states, “*all main functions of governance and regulation of the school education system - namely, the provision of public education, the regulation of education institutions, and policymaking - are handled by a single body, i.e., the Department of School Education or its arms. This leads to conflict of interests and excessive centralized concentration of power; it also leads to ineffective management of the school system...*” (NEP Para 8.2)

NEP in Section 8.5(c) also lays down that “An effective quality self-regulation or accreditation system will be instituted for all stages of education including pre-school education - private, public, and philanthropic - to ensure compliance with essential quality standards. To ensure that all schools follow certain minimal professional and quality standards, States/UTs will set up an independent, State-wide, body called the State School Standards Authority (SSSA). The SSSA will establish a minimal set of standards based on basic parameters (namely, safety, security, basic infrastructure, number of teachers across subjects and grades, financial probity, and sound processes of governance), which shall be followed by all schools.

These Implementation Recommendations made for the SSSA attempts to wire the regulatory framework to encourage students' safety, parental empowerment, school autonomy and system accountability for better governance.

What is the approach of the proposed Recommendations?

There is a need to create a principles-based, light-but-tight regulatory architecture. These principles are:

1. Incorporating the principle of regulatory neutrality
2. Equipping parents with information on school performance and fees, for an informed choice and;
3. Ensuring school autonomy while maintaining accountability for learning outcomes

By incorporating these Four Implementation Recommendations mentioned below, the existing state-level regulation can be streamlined into a single comprehensive SSSA Body of self-regulation & self-disclosures as prescribed by the NEP 2020. This document outlines the recommendations regarding the composition and operations of the State Schools Standards Authority (SSSA) recommended in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 for maximised educational outcomes and good governance.

Recommendation 1: Constitute an independent State Schools Standard Authority for regulatory neutrality.

Section	NEP Recommendations	Implementation Recommendations
8.5 (c)	<p>An effective quality self-regulation or accreditation system will be instituted for all stages of education including pre-school education - private, public, and philanthropic - to ensure compliance with essential quality standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For effective self-regulation the schools should provide annual reports based on self-disclosures for basic parameters for safety, security, basic infrastructure, number of teachers across subjects and grades, financial probity, and sound processes of governance.
8.5 (c)	<p>The SSSA will establish a minimal set of standards based on basic parameters (namely, safety, security, basic infrastructure, number of teachers across subjects and grades, financial probity, and sound processes of governance), which shall be followed by all schools. The framework for these parameters will be created by the SCERT in consultation with various stakeholders, especially teachers and schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The listed parameters have already been defined by various governmental bodies and statutory Acts: the RTE Act, the POCSO Act, Fee Regulation Act, Disaster Management Authority to name a few. The minimal standards set by the SSSA for self-disclosure should align, cohesive guidelines should be promulgated that do not contradict with existing provisions. If the standards set by respective Bodies / Acts are upgraded or changed, then the same must be updated and aligned in the SSSA standards. For effective Implementation if there is a conflicting judgement between the various Acts, SSSA should act as a redressal mechanism.
8.5 (c)	<p>Any complaints or grievances from stakeholders or others arising out of the information placed in the public domain shall be adjudicated by the SSSA.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To act as both an Ombudsman as well as adjudicator for the information placed in the public domain, the SSSA may act as a single window for all the stakeholders. All other governmental regulatory / advisory bodies must go through the SSSA. Advisory/ recommendatory bodies such as NCPCR who are not mandated to issue orders may continue with their present roles as envisaged. Complaint or grievance redressal mechanism as provided in recently amended Haryana legislation can be proposed covering all the aspects of the SSSA.

Figure 1: Regulatory Neutrality



Recommendation 2: The Formation and Composition of the SSSA

Section	NEP Recommendations	Implementation Recommendations
8.5 (a)	The Department of School Education, which is the apex state-level body in school education, will be responsible for overall monitoring and policymaking for continual improvement of the public education system; it will not be involved with the provision and operation of schools or with the regulation of schools, in order to ensure due focus on the improvement of public schools and to eliminate conflict of interests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SSSA should be independent of the DSE & Government examination bodies. Recommendations for composition of a 8-member Independent Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 Retired Officers having held Education portfolio for minimum of 3 years of the rank of School Commissioner or above. - 2 Retired Principals having over 15 years of administrative service experience of which at least one of them should be from a private school. - 1 member from Research in Audit / Curriculum / Assessment /Governance /EdTech committees for minimum of 3 years - 1 member from NGO / International bodies working in the K-12 sector. - 1 representative from Budget/ Minority schools. - 1 Industry Member from Finance/ Marketing/ Legal and other specific functions.
8.5 (b)	The educational operations and service provision for the public schooling system of the whole State will be handled by the Directorate of School Education (including the offices of the DEO and BEO, etc.); it will work independently to implement policies regarding educational operations and provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DSE and its entire machinery should no longer have any role in the regulation of schools (public or private).
8.5 (c)	To ensure that all schools follow certain minimal professional and quality standards, States/UTs will set up an independent, State-wide, body called the State School Standards Authority (SSSA).	

Recommendation 3: Operational Aspects of the SSSA for Educational Outcomes

Section	NEP Recommendations	Implementation Recommendations
8.5 (c)	Transparent public self-disclosure of all the basic regulatory information, as laid down by the SSSA, will be used extensively for public oversight and accountability. The dimensions on which information has to be self-disclosed, and the format of disclosure will be decided by the SSSA in accordance with global best practices for standard-setting for schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SSSA mechanism is not inspection based. It should be based on self-disclosure as prescribed in the NEP. • The dimension and format of disclosure should be such that it accounts for the range of public and private schools including budget private schools in line with cost of education. • Technology is meant to be the primary interface for all SSSA operations including self-disclosures through micro-websites for each school, data collection tools, grievance mechanism, feedback handling mechanisms etc. • SSSA shall ensure that all children in school are assessed at key-stages (class 3, 5 and 8) annually or as it may specify, and that assessment data collected is reliable and publicly available. This will help bridge the information asymmetry between parents and schools on learning levels. • To achieve the 21 century learning objectives very clearly articulated in the NEP, there is a need to build seamless bridges between curriculum planning, standard setting, pedagogical framework and assessments. ex the SQAAP of CBSE. • Student feedback and input on the SSSA website will add a relevant stakeholder dimension and bring about transparency in operations.
8.5 (c)	This information will have to be made available and kept updated and accurate by all schools, on the aforementioned public website maintained by the SSSA and on the schools' website.	
8.5 (c)	Technology will be employed suitably to ensure efficiency and transparency in all work of the SSSA. This will bring down significantly the heavy load of regulatory mandates currently borne by schools.	
8.5 (c)	Feedback from randomly selected students will be solicited online to ensure valuable input at regular intervals.	

Recommendation 4: Self Disclosures for performance, transparency & governance

Section	NEP Recommendations	Implementation Recommendations
8.7	Public and private schools (except the schools that are managed / aided / controlled by the Central government) will be assessed and accredited on the same criteria, benchmarks, and processes, emphasizing online and offline public disclosure and transparency, so as to ensure that public-spirited private schools are encouraged and not stifled in any way. Public disclosure on the school website and on the SSSA website - for both public and private schools - would include (at the very least) information on the numbers of classrooms, students, and teachers, subjects taught, any fees, and overall student outcomes on standardized evaluations such as the NAS and SAS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a credible model framework for appointed SSSAs to follow that enables public and private schools to establish the highest standards of Governance, Transparency and Self- Regulation. Ensure holistic evaluation of schools on comprehensive set of metrics which is a combination of both input and output-based criterion and that is in sync with the Global Standards. • External third party credible agencies can be empanelled to carry out the ratings. Schools should be mandated to undergo this rating exercise every five years. Rating report should be clear and comprehensive that offers both commendations and recommendations on qualitative & quantitative aspects. These reports should be uploaded on school websites (ex SQAAP being developed by CBSE). • Public self-disclosure specifications should align with other parameters already set in affiliation and other bodies (ex OASIS of CBSE and Fees orders in the State FRC websites and RTE Infrastructure parameters). Recently amended Rules 158 – 160 of Haryana School Education Rules, 2003 along with the Disclosure Form as prescribed provide a transparent and self-regulatory framework for Fee regulation.

Appendix A: Extracts from NEP 2020 Section 8.5 & 8.7 relevant to State School Standards Authority (SSSA)

8.5 The key principles and recommendations of this Policy regarding the State school education system, the independent responsibilities within that system, and the approach to its regulation are as follows:

- (a) The Department of School Education, which is the apex state-level body in school education, will be responsible for overall monitoring and policymaking for continual improvement of the public education system; it will not be involved with the provision and operation of schools or with the regulation of schools, in order to ensure due focus on the improvement of public schools and to eliminate conflict of interests.
- (b) The educational operations and service provision for the public schooling system of the whole State will be handled by the Directorate of School Education (including the offices of the DEO and BEO, etc.); it will work independently to implement policies regarding educational operations and provision.
- (c) An effective quality self-regulation or accreditation system will be instituted for all stages of education including pre-school education - private, public, and philanthropic - to ensure compliance with essential quality standards. To ensure that all schools follow certain minimal professional and quality standards, States/UTs will set up an independent, State-wide, body called the State School Standards Authority (SSSA). The SSSA will establish a minimal set of standards based on basic parameters (namely, safety, security, basic infrastructure, number of teachers across subjects and grades, financial probity, and sound processes of governance), which shall be followed by all schools. The framework for these parameters will be created by the SCERT in consultation with various stakeholders, especially teachers and schools.

Transparent public self-disclosure of all the basic regulatory information, as laid down by the SSSA, will be used extensively for public oversight and accountability. The dimensions on which information has to be self-disclosed, and the format of disclosure will be decided by the SSSA in accordance with global best practices for standard-setting for schools. This information will have to be made available and kept updated and accurate by all schools, on the aforementioned public website maintained by the SSSA and on the schools' websites. Any complaints or grievances from stakeholders or others arising out of the information placed in the public domain shall be adjudicated by the SSSA. Feedback from randomly selected students will be solicited online to ensure valuable input at regular intervals. Technology will be employed suitably to ensure efficiency and transparency in all work of the SSSA. This will bring down significantly the heavy load of regulatory mandates currently borne by schools.

8.7 Public and private schools (except the schools that are managed/aided/controlled by the Central government) will be assessed and accredited on the same criteria, benchmarks, and processes, emphasizing online and offline public disclosure and transparency, so as to ensure that public-spirited private schools are encouraged and not stifled in any way. Private philanthropic efforts for quality education will be encouraged - thereby affirming the public-good nature of education - while protecting parents and communities from arbitrary increases in tuition fees. Public disclosure on the school website and on the SSSA website - for both public and private schools - would include (at the very least) information on the numbers of classrooms, students, and teachers, subjects taught, any fees, and overall student outcomes on standardized evaluations such as the NAS and SAS. For schools controlled/managed/aided by the Central government, the CBSE in consultation with the MHRD shall prepare a framework. All the education institutions will be held to similar standards of audit and disclosure as a 'not-for-profit' entity. Surpluses, if any, will be reinvested in the educational sector.

Acknowledgements & Credits

[Centre for Civil Society (CCS), National Independent Schools Alliance (NISA),
National Progressive Schools Conference (NPSC), Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI)]

Powered By Kalorex